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The "Strike" of Periphery
The Twisted Road from Backwardness to Political Radicalism in Eastern Europe

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Focusing on the way Easterners, both westernizers and traditionalists – I will also refer them as Europeanists, modernists, and liberals on one hand, and Slavophiles, conservatives, and autochtonists on the other hand, according to the categories in use in 19th and 20th century ideological and political debates – perceived the West and its values, and responded to its challenges, namely the 18th century "dual revolution", and the 19th and early 20th century rapid modernization, industrial revolution, urbanization, and national-state, the present paper aims to analyze and present in general outlines, the politics and ideology of "anti-", the Eastern "negations" of the West.

Aware of the fact that many of those negative responses were anticipative and embedded by intellectual inadequacy, I will try to approach them not necessarily as "Eastern indictment ...and symptoms of a conservative fear of progress, typical for backward societies"[1]. My intention is not to emphasize the long pedigree of radical right, or revolutionary left ideologies, but rather to address them from the perspective opened by the "archeology of ideas", as defined by Hayden White[2]. At the same time, I will not disregard the pro-Western, *Ex Occidente Lux* obsession of the "European Suburbs" elites from the "early days", as those are intrinsically related to the former.

When transgressing national borders as a too narrow political geography that would only restrain my analysis while down playing what is mutable and porous, I will look at Eastern Europe as a whole and do not divide it into distinct regions. Nonetheless, when necessary, I will stress differences that occurred among the "political actors" in terms of cultural and institutional heritage. I will also try to avoid the hegemonic, teleological and telescopical definitions of modernity, industrialization, and progress as those often lead to fallacy. A different timing will be stressed too as long as "classic" chronology is of less use due to significant asyncronisms that occurred between West and East on one hand, and among Eastern countries on the other.

Although I will consider those more or less syncronical and complete responses as illustrative for the Eastern politics and ideologies, I will nonetheless emphasize contagion, emulation and imitation by Easterners of the Western "core ideological model" as a significant part of the whole process[2].

Perfect antithesis, those positive and negative responses represents the most pervasive phenomenon in the modern political life of the East European states and societies. "National", at least perceived as such at the time they took shape, and regional from nowadays perspectives, those by products – rationalized doctrines and

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[1] See Jerzy JEDLICKI, *A Suburb of Europe: Nineteen-century Polish Approaches to Western Civilization*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 1999, p. ix.

[2] See Hayden WHITE, *Tropics of Discourse, Essays in Cultural Criticism*, John Hopkins University Press, London, 1992, pp. 151-152.

mystical prophecies, idealist or realist (re)solutions – of the Eastern political elites and intelligentsia are, beyond particularities, but variants of a European process[1]. A process that included "a core model" as well as specific features rooted in long term historical development, a mixture of fear and trust as emotional reactions, gradual domestication and adaptability[2]. Nonetheless those responses from the part of "periphery" depict the dynamic representation of the West, whose legitimacy was put under question by East European political thought "shortly" after being unconditionally accepted[3]. Entangled within a maze of ideological and social processes, lacking clear continuity, recalling political traditions – many of them recently invented ones[4] –, sharing and displaying similar obsessions and frustrations, those responses are nothing but the final outcome of "those who arranged their policy to suit the realities of the world, and those who imagined the world to suit their policy"[5].

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[1] Following Alexander Gerschenkron, I will stress here in particular the tendency of intelligentsia in underdeveloped countries toward "philosophizing about things. than doing them". See Alexander GERSCHENKRON, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1962, pp. 196-197. For a good definition of intelligentsia in Eastern Europe see Jerzy JEDLICKI, *A Suburb of Europe*…cit, p. 7. I will approach intelligentsia as a social stratum (and not class) that in time "replaced" nobility and the educated gentry elite, and became the most westernized segment within Eastern societies. My special interest here is with the way this well confined strata managed to impart from the second half of 19th century a rather new historical sense for the nation, and guide her toward a "better future". Nonetheless, I will try to underline what exactly, beyond the adverse circumstances, was to make intelligentsia look at the Metropolis with contradictory feelings of admiration, distrust and envy, a curious combination of inferiority complex and national megalomania.

[2] A certain dose of national specificity exists as those responses were shaped according to specific, national problems. Some general features can be underlined and suggest that an Eastern prototype based on common historical experience has to be stressed. However, the role of the impulse of the master model with its ideological centers and roots is not to be denied as long as in many cases Eastern elites and intelligentsia only filtered through regional and national political cultures pure Western ideas.

[3] The case of Russian intelligentsia is paradigmatic not only with regard the process of its formation. The way Russian populists responded not only to domestic development of capitalism but also Western capitalism and socialism – their response will inspire a wide range of essentially regressive antiparliamentary, antidemocratic, anti-liberal and anti-capitalist ideologies, at the same time offering an inspirational model and extremely voluntaristic conviction that a small revolutionary minority can change by will and action the future of their nation – is also exemplary and has to be stressed. See Andrej WALISCKI, *The Controversy over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Ind., 1989, pp. 132, 149.

[4] See Erick HOBSBAWM, "Mass Invention of Tradition in Europe, 1870-1914", in Erick HOBSBAWM, Terence RANGE (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 263 and the following.

[5] In the particular case of Poland, Adam Bromke emphasizes foreign policy as a fundamental issue overshadowing all other matters. However, all Easterners were to share, though at different intensity, the same universal dilemma and fear, a lack of security, a frustrating history, the obsession with political geography of a "small country" with a "Great Past", and the desire to change their international status of small boy. A national, distinct political entity, was the dream of all Easterners, while the rest of elements of the European agenda: modernization, industrialization, social change and economic progress represented rather means and not ends. Adam BROMKE, *Poland's Politics. Idealism vs. Realism*, Cambridge Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1967, p. 2.

If it was for the periphery to miss the chance to develop a modern industrial capitalism, this is not to be explained exclusively in terms of lack of abilities and – or combined with –unfavorable external political circumstances. It is also for the way the elites of the East perceived the whole process as a mere challenge to their nation and translated everything in terms of survival, less economic and more heroic self-realization, less prosaic and more idealist "words", to help the historian elucidate the "conundrum" of modernization and industrialization in this part of the world. The weak bourgeoisie of the periphery, and the incomplete, defeated, restarted, and finally rounded up and "imposed from above" revolutions, are to find their roots in the unstable balance between organic reforms and development, and the permanent search for "universal panacea"[1].

19th and early 20th century Eastern Europe is often described as a "tangled network" of backward societies that "professed the goals of the West while lacking its means", a world that embraced the universal symbols of liberalism at the time rejecting traditional, conservative values and norms, strongly committed to economic progress and industrialization yet not so much to parliamentary democracy[2]. And indeed, with the exception of Czechoslovakia after 1918[3], the rest of the Eastern political realm opposed absolutism, autocracy and totalitarianism but nonetheless often came to stress – mainly in times of crisis –the necessity of an authoritarian, interventionist, though civilized, state. A "crisis of peripheral liberalism" and "a collective decline of the charisma of the West", followed by the "seizure in power" of neo-corporative, neo-conservative and new radical ideologies and regimes, and accompanied by the strong appeal of the "new solutions" and "new magnetism" of the political extremes, are added as the final part of the demonstration, and are meant to explain, at least to a certain extend, the "misery of the small states"[4]. However, those are also to leave the impression that the "non-weberian" Eastern societies were "doomed" to fail from the very beginning in their attempt to "catch up" with the more advanced West. Their "dispossessed proletariat" and "immobile peasants", xenophobia and propensity toward heroic mythology, Christian traditionalism, millenarist-salvationist philosophy that bound to the idea of sacrifice and devotion, are often employed as to complete "the work of a long, vicious, and ruthless history". Scholars from various fields "attach" to this preconceived frame several confining conditions such as a lack of international mobility, dependency and semi-colonial mercantilist exploitation by neighboring empires, discrepancies between a low level of savings and huge consumption[5]. Overpopulation is the second main factor to increase risks, no matter the rapid industrialization or its absence in a particular case. Beyond the unfavorable

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[1] Ivan T. BEREND, Gyorgy RANKI (eds.), *The European Periphery and Industrialization*, Akademiai Kiado, Budapest, 1982, pp. 27-39.

[2] Andrew JANOS, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1982, p. 316.

[3] Vladimir TISMĂNEANU, *Reinventing Politics. Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel*, Polirom, Iași, 1995, pp. 30-39. To Tismăneanu, Czechoslovakia represents an exception from all points of view and at all levels. It seems that the only thing this country was to share with the rest of the region was geography, and a ruthless merciless history.

[4] Istvan BIBO, *Misère de petits États d'Europe de l'Est*, Gallimard, Paris, 1993.

[5] Andrew JANOS, *The Politics of Backwardness*…cit., pp. 319-320. See also Alexander GERSCHENCKRON, *Economic Backwardness*…cit., pp. 196-197. A rapid increase in the level of consumption represents a strong tendency in all underdeveloped countries. A keen desire to

historical context, the premature rise of a state bound to regressive political traditions, a ruthless nationalism, and so on, were only to interrupt the road to *Gesselschaft* and return the Eastern societies to *Gemeinschaft*[1]. Also true that many scholars do not pay enough consideration to the fact that the authoritarianism of the state was to slow down and temper the tendency of the leadership in the (permanent) making to find overnight solutions and leap from economic and social means of progress to offensive political action. It is nonetheless true that on a long term its efforts were rather palliation. Its political, economic-financial and cultural "wizardries" were to encourage the formation of a professional political class and uphold political and not economic entrepreneurship. Thus, in many respects the authoritarian state was to indirectly encourage the deviation of the advancing but never advanced enough "latecomers" from the classical standard model. Its ambivalent and inadequate response was nevertheless to stress the moral impulse and the primacy of politics over economics. Distinct cultural, institutional, and confessional patterns and heritages, and long-term perspectives are also employed as differences occurred among countries and sub-regions, in many yet not always so relevant for the discussion, terms – of which many are not innocent as they are bound to political agendas when searching and articulating different national and sub-regional ontologies.

By the late 1930s the "Enlightment dream" and civilizational choice of the 19th century already underwent a wrong direction in the "European periphery". As the "coat of arms" of modernization: the city, the industrial development, and so on could not be destroyed or abandoned they were only stressed to absurd in what their "ideological enemies" distrusted most in them. The ideas of progress and modernization, economic development and social change never ceased to exist as part of the ideological and political realm of the East. However the generalized skepticism toward the values of the 19th century and the too long and fierce debate between the 'camps' and opposed pair concepts were to pervert them to the extend that when compared with the original they seem irecognoscible. The East is not unique in this sense as long as similar debates are characteristic for the intellectual and political life of the Western core and the semi-periphery as well[2]. Same forms of religious, social, national, and bureaucratic grounded negations, a similar idealization of the past and pre-capitalist society, catastrophic visions of history, and concern with the danger of loosing the sense of national identity and specificity due to the policies of the Great Empires or the frenchifying-materializing influences of the West were idioms scattered all over the continent, and common topics for all those who stressed the idea that pointers for progress and guiding lines should be looked for in the national Past – some of those authors were well intended, nonetheless they forgot to tell their readers how this search should be carried out. Many of those responses were nothing but the reversal of early professed faith that the "Golden Age" lies not behind but ahead of mankind, a saint-simonian idea that was meant to ignite the imagination of men in the absence of prospects for profit as a stimulus, and thus make them break through the barriers of stagnation and economic underdevelopment. The

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adopt the pattern of the advanced countries, this tendency is to lead only to huge discrepancies between wish and reality.

[1] George SCHOPFLIN, *Politics in Eastern Europe: 1945-1992*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993, pp. 4-7.

[2] See Jerzy JEDLICKI, *A Suburb of Europe*…cit, pp. 213-215.

German "semi-periphery" later translated this idea in nationalist terms as to make it fit in the local frame and environment – with its lack of a preceding revolution and a recent state unification –, while in the more backward countries of the East a much more powerful yet not completely different ideology was required as to "grease" the intellectual and emotional wheels of industrialization[1].

In order to explain the failure of industrialism and modernization process in Eastern Europe many authors describe the region, when comparing it with the successful West as a stagnant, inert, and traditional region that, though following the same path, was unable to surmount the obstacles of the "peaceful conquest"[2]. Not only its societies were unprepared to accept transformation but also unable to copy or bypass the model of "inner" Europe. Part of the third descending circle, including countries more or less prepared to face, if at all, the changes of modernity, the Eastern part of the old continent begins at the line where the process of industrialization stooped for generations due to soil conditions, the absence of markets, lack of advanced technology, and an interplay of location, temporal, and contemporaneous conditions[3]. In other words, an agrarian traditionalism that stooped the normal flux, human and historical local conditions, including less industrial and commercial development, less agrarian adaptation, less or no urbanization, the absence of a bank system, and squeezed peasants are to explain the Eastern lack of what made Western Europe an unique model, namely the pre-industrialization settings: the guilds, rural domestic industry, centralized manufacture and later, market opportunities. Therefore, in spite of the fact that Eastern societies followed the same path and shared the obsession of catching with the West and its material progress – an obsession inoculated by the elites as to become part of the national culture – their contribution to the process, beyond both 19th century emulation and rejection that are not so much original in character and national in ideology but rather pan European and super-regional, is minimal.

In economic terms, the backwardness of Eastern Europe is translated in its level of per capita that never managed to go above a quarter or, in best cases, a third of the average of the core model. With its small-scale peasants based agriculture and incipient large scale-industrialization process – hallmarks of a delayed development and "arrested modernization" – the Eastern societies are portraying the image of the very "dependency of periphery", with its cheap labor force in a state of "second serfdom" and raw materials, on imperial hegemony[4]. Military rivalry and fiscal imperatives imposed by the great powers, centuries old retarding effect and so on, were – and sometimes still are – to offer the natives the possibility to explain backwardness and dependency in terms of semi-colonialism and domination. The very core of local liberals' mythology, this perception can not be totally dismissed. However, it is not to be completely embraced as it might lead to fallacies and stress particularism. The proximity of empires was in some cases to bring benefits as well. For the Czechs and for the Hungarians, the Habsburg Empire with its non-stagnant economy represented in fact an agent for change and rapid increase in production. In the case of Ottoman and Russian Empire the situation is completely different. The two

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[1] Alexander GERSCHENKRON, *Economic Backwardness*...cit., pp. 23-27.

[2] Sydney POLLARD, *Peaceful Conquest. The Industrialization of Europe 1760-1970*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981, p. 45.

[3] *Ibidem*., pp. 45-46.

[4] John R. LAMPE, *Balkan Economic History, 1550-1950. From Imperial Borderlands to Developing Nations*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1978, pp. 172-179.

empires can play the role of the "scapegoat" but only hardly explain why by 1914 the gap between the West and, for example, Romania or Bulgaria was larger than it was in 1848. A short overture of 19th and early 20th century history of the region might suggest something else. First of all, it would point out the fact that differences in all terms, including industrial development, between the core and the periphery, were not so significant and were to increase, sometimes dramatically, after the moment when the national-states of the region became independent, or at least autonomous. A lack of Western investments in an otherwise productive region, a lure of convertible paper currency, or the fact that beyond massive exports no accumulation and improvements in an extensive rather than intensive agricultural and industrial production took place are workable arguments. Yet, they do not tell us much as they are oblivious to the autarchic policy of some governments, a policy based on the idea of the national state as a self-sufficient economic unit, and protectionism toward foreign investments. The economic policies of the Romanian Liberal National Party from the 1920s are paradigmatic in this sense. Romanian decision-makers were to realize the economic dependency soon, during the 1929-1933 world economic crises.

With their doubled cultivated areas, rising population and tripled exports[1], followed by massive expenses in infrastructure, transports, and education – sometimes far beyond the necessary level[2] – the East European states leave us the impressions of several attempts to "take-of". Unfortunately, in real terms, they were only to repeatedly fail due to fluctuations on a saturated international wheat market, a dependant on exports an foreign investments[3] weak industry based on manufacturing and mining sectors, a permanently increasing burden – and not only in domestic economic terms, but also in terms of international affairs and diplomacy – and a continuous reliance on concessions.

"The institutional gradations of backwardness, as Alexander Gershenkron put it, seem to find their counterpart in men's thinking about backwardness and the way in which it can be abolished". The more underdeveloped their societies were, the greater the pressures and the tendency of the state to introduce the most expensive yet not always modern and reliable technology, and stress the necessity for large scale plant – heavy industry was one of the main obsessions in those countries, long before the seizure in power of the communist regimes. Without being exclusively a sign of

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[1] Agriculture represented in this region not the engine of growth, as many were inclined to think, but mere a permanent "nightmare". Not even the most radical reforms like the Romanian one from 1923 were to improve the situation as agriculture was to be defined by self-consumption and self-sufficiency. The only gain was a mere political one, as conservative landowners parties were wiped out of Parliament. In contrast, in the case of Hungary the absence of agrarian reform was to become the stalking horse of the right wing radical politicians.

[2] See Irina LIVEZEANU, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation-Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1995. The importance given to the educational system is to reveal among other things the obsession with the mimetic competition with the West.

[3] Andrew JANOS, *The Politics of Backwardness…*cit. State loans and financial wizardry and not the attraction of private investments represent the main concern of East European governments. Huge amounts of money were used not for productive investments but infrastructure, railways, education – it was not for technical training but national consciousness to represent the mere priority –, rearmament, bureaucracy wages. Peasant were transformed into citizens but not workers, while the price for this otherwise remarkable success consisted in huge shortages of industrial labor, an obsolete or completely absent entrepreneurial culture and domestic market, a lack of urban massification, and so on.

megalomania and a search for prestige and international status, and beyond imitation with more advanced countries, such tendencies are nothing but the expression of indigenous elements concerns with regard the possibility of equalizing as rapid as possible, and no matter the price, the Western level of civilization and progress. If those tendencies were to become the "dogma", this is due to the belief of liberals that an immediate and complete replacement of previous economic-cultural settlements and patterns will allow their society to catch up the West in an overnight process[1]. The mechanical transfer of the Western institutional façade was operated by the "retinue elites". At the time, this mimetism was considered imperative and not so much premature. To find a patron and gain its support, nonetheless exploit its resources for domestic and international purpose was the most direct manner of claiming identity and become recognoscible. Quasi-magical and bound to prestige and honor, more definitional and less empirical, this sudden import of "slices" of Western civilization was later to leave the impression of the existence of a huge gap between the "European city" and the "Asiatic countryside", the oligarchic bureaucracy and the lower classes, and the existence in-between the political elites and the "agrarian nation" of an "ethnic bourgeoisie"[2]. It is nonetheless true that this negative critique was somewhat based on reality. As an institutional adjustment never took place, the state was forced to operate under coercive auspices and strained to play the role of an instrument that was to recognize or ignore the new claimants. In a society with markets but not market society, with status and not class relations, where politics can be understood in terms of clientelism and not bargaining and maneuvering coalition, the state was concerned first of all with avoiding conflict and forcing coexistence. Thus, it was only to import from international to domestic affairs the Big-Man – small-boy pattern, and therefore create an "inner periphery". Unfortunately, as the road to the proposed goal was not so smooth, the struggle of Europeanists against the conservative forces was to lead in time – due to a strange, extremely dynamic and sophisticated political "alchemy" – , rather to a combination of patterns that seem irreconcilable during the first decades of the modernization process. Pro and anti industrial values, ideologies, and politics were somewhat to loose in intensity while a permanently changing attitude of the opposite camps – including inflexion points mainly in times of social and political tension – is noticeable from nowadays perspective.

The first reaction of the 19th century traditionalists was to run back into history and recover the values and virtues of the "Golden Age". This response was shaped in opposition to both the early days liberals and their tentative of escaping the Past, and West. On a long term, a round journey from a complex of inferiority to one of superiority is to better describe the whole process. By the time East European societies entered the world system classic liberalism lost its hold on the new elites and the masses that were no longer to accept inequalities and explanations from the political top. Past frustration and tensions were retrieved and were also to feed the ideological challenges of both marxism-leninism and fascism. If it was for fascism to succeed better in the region that was due only to the fact that the new elites were striving for national specificity and original doctrines, and not a new, international, or universal model

[1] See Keneth JOWITH, *Social Change in Romania (1860-1940) A Debate on Development in a European Nation*, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkley, 1978, pp. 13-20.

[2] Andrew JANOS, *The Politics of Backwardness…*cit., pp. 240-258.

and order. Nonetheless it was for the state corporative policy, non-revolutionary and bureaucratic, technocratic and often ethnocratic, to somewhat open the door to politics for fascism. The new economic mobilization and scientific organization were to work with surprising results, yet the modernizing dictatorship, the idea of single party as an epitome of efficiency, and the National Rebirth Regimes, were only to register a abysmal failure in politics as they were never to convince the masses that they can play the role of professional political revolutionaries and represent the new agent of change[1]. After more than a century of coexistence into a "melting pot" of politics the two patterns were to loose their sharp distinctiveness and nonetheless contribute to the birth of "ideological mutants". Like their ancestors those "mutants" appealed on one hand to revolutionary means, and on the other hand looked into the past just to extract the grasp of values that was supposed to shape their utopia. Nonetheless their henchmen had to make people believe that they perform an important social function and represent the "highway from backwardness to progress".

In Eastern Europe industrialization and economic progress represented one of the main priorities but definitely not the most important one. As Easterners always lived with the impression that the issue of timing is the most relevant element in the competition with the "core model", they were to search within the political agenda of the West for aims that were not only of extreme relevance but also easy to achieve. Nationalism as an ideology, and the nation-state as a political goal, seemed for many to be the most suitable, and also to provide the firm base for future development and progress.

The complex nation-building process was somewhat to force the decision-makers to inhibit in different moments the idealist response and reinforce *Realpolitik*: economic development, industrialization, and social change; as the significant element of their program. This is to explain in many respects the permanent conflict between the government and the opposition, and later, in some cases, between the modernizing dictatorships and the radical and revolutionary forces. Some outstanding scholars suggest that nationalism and national identity cannot succeed in their attempt to appeal the masses as long as they do not benefit from the secondary effects of large-scale urbanization, industrialization and large educational system[2]. Others suggest that except for the case of England, all the other European nations and national identities emerged as collectively forged entities that were shaped according to a preceding model[3]. A possible answer lays in-between, and it is also to explain both the success of nationalism and the failure of the modernizing process.

In 19th century Eastern Europe a reproduction of basic features of the first stages of modernization somewhat occurred. A common pattern including some rural migration to the urban areas, some spatial separation of areas into residential and industrial, and a greater suburban development can be observed. Yet, the process was not identical. Differences between East and West and among Eastern countries denote a late and delayed development, and the fact that the region hardly belongs to the

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[1] From this perspective the case of Romania and Hungary are paradigmatic. See Armin HEINEN, *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail. O contribuție la înțelegerea Fascismului internațional*, Humanitas, București, 1998; Nicholas NAGY-TALAVERA, *The Green Shirts and the Others. A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania,* Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, California, 1970.

[2] Ernst GELLNER, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983.

[3] Liah GREENFELD, *Nationalism. Five Roads to Modernity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1992.

modern and urbanized world[1]. Discrepancies are extremely visible when it comes to the Balkans, where it is not for the medieval city of the Western type to represent the model, like in Poland and Bohemia, but for the Ottoman one. Even in the 19th century, the Southeast European city oscillated between the two models and represented rather a strange combination in structure as well as function between the two. However, the second part of 19th century was to confine urban growth within the larger process of nation-state development. Thus, periods of rapid though non-systematic and un-natural maturation alternated with periods of stagnation. To give a good example: interwar Bucharest grew due to an enforced industrial development and in absence of service functions and infrastructure, while at a national level the urbanization process was rather slow. The context was somewhat to balance, at least in quantitative terms, the situation. The case of Hungary and Romania after 1918 is illustrative in this sense. The later lost significant territories and population, the former annexed new provinces and almost tripled its population. However both countries became, at least in quantitative terms, more urbanized and industrialized. Thus, during the interwar period, a hampered industrialization and poor urbanization can better describe the general situation in Eastern Europe, where the general output in 1938 was in many cases under the level it reached in 1913: 80% of Bulgarian, 70% of Romanian and Polish, and 60% of Hungarian population was still rural and underemployed, nonetheless overexploited, in agriculture. Although the pressure was lower than it was in the West, the response from Eastern intellectuals was as diverse as the one of the counterpart. To offer a relevant example: the city as a symbol of virtue or conversely vice was simply borrowed from the Western discourse. If the city as vice – and its inhabitants as the "icon" of decadence and corruption – was to become predominant in the East that was due neither to the pressures of 19th century industrialism nor to the rural-traditional structure of the society. Beyond national differences that are only to blur the image, it was for the contagious Western ideologies to scatter all over the region a whole grasp of clichés that do not necessarily reflect the reality.

What made in the East the shift in perception from the West as a center of man's most valued activities, progress and civilization, industry and high culture, freedom and order, to reaction in all terms: untrustworthy, unpatriotic, socially unreliable and labile, un-natural; and the sudden return to the romantic idea of agrarianism as the natural destiny of man is still debatable. What is relevant in the case of Eastern countries is the fact that the return to an idealized past was professed by those who benefited for most from social mobility and a less hierarchical society, the artificially created by the state intelligentsia[2]. This negative critique was the "privilege" of intelligentsia all over Europe but it was mainly in the Eastern part of the continent for it to be successful. A religious, moral peasant, opposed to the decadent modern man, the blood of the unhappy victims of industrialization, the city as an alienation and not civilizing agent, and as a social crime, the image of "two nations", and so on were the recurrent themes of nationalist, populist, socialist and proto-fascist or neo-rightist

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[1] Gyorg ENYEDI, "Urbanisation under Socialism", in Gregory ANDRUSZ, Michael HARLOE, Ivan SZELENYI (eds.), *Cities After Socialism. Urban and Regional Change and Conflict in Post-Socialist Societies*, Blackwell, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1996, pp.106-108.

[2] Saul FRIEDLANDER, *The Years of Extermination*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2007, pp. xiii and the following. See also Cristopher BROWNING, *The Origins of the Final Solution. The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942*, University of Nebraska Press, Yad Vashem, Lincoln, Jerusalem, 2004, pp. 1-10.

literature of the West. The end of the 19th century registered only a shift from hope to frustration, from tiers of pity to bitter hatred, and sketched the future negations of extreme ideologies of the 20th century. By that time Eastern Europe was paradoxically already tired after several attempts to take of and thus ready to accept such ideas. A product of the Westernization process, intelligentsia disclosed in its development all the main symptoms of a marginal group. Imagined as a progressive group, whose mission was to transform a backward traditional community into a modern society on the model of France, intelligentsia lived with the impression of its gradual alienation from the native culture. In response, it started to identify itself with the people, with their traditional way of life and culture and thus, came to trigger an intense process of revival, reappraisal and indeed exaggeration of native, hence specifically traditions, values, and, generally speaking, ways of life. The village and the peasant became symbols of honesty, sanity and primeval purity, the strongholds of national life. Christianity itself became a virtue for the "populist" movements. Altogether those were to become hotbeds of palingenetic ultra-nationalism and racism[1].

By the time Mussolini came in power the negations of fascist ideology were already successful in the East[2]. Around 1890 the"incubatory of fascism" was already in place. The same is to be stated with regard its "raw materials". World War I as a crack of the Old World was only to bring the seeds of fascism into light. Rather old right wing reactions, those negations can be considered as by products of a proto-fascist ideology, and are to explain, beyond the special experience of the generation between the wars and contagion with the core models, the plural intellectual origins and national roots of fascism. However, those necessary prerequisites proved to be insufficient for the success of fascism in the East where the less revolutionary and failing to adopt the issue of generational conflict right wing politicians were to forgot all affinities, opt for authoritarian regimes, and went to an open conflict with the domestic political periphery. Howbeit the enthusiasm toward fascism was momentary and in some cases totally absent. Huge expectations and disappointment as well as misunderstandings[3] were to play in the region the role of preconditions of fascism, as hostility to socialism and the proletariat did not had a real domestic base[4]. Generally speaking the Eastern option, and definitely not the first one, was for authoritarian regimes. The Central East Europe "outdated type of dictator": Horthy,

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[1] Philippe BURRIN, *Nazi Anti-Semitism. From Prejudice to the Holocaust*, The New Press, New York, 2005, pp. 5 and the following. For Romania, see Leon VOLOVICI, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism, The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*, Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1993, pp. 3 and the following.

[2] Hugh TRAVOR-ROPER, "The Phenomenon of Fascism European", in S.J. WOLF (ed.), *European Fascism*, University of Reading, Lowe and Brydon ltd., London, 1968, p. 27.

[3] Many Eastern politicians at the time were to describe fascism as a force that might revive and stimulate in the nation its better instincts and sentiments: love of the motherland, respect of religion, a sense of family bond, the capacity for self-sacrifice, love of work and social order, realization of the need of discipline, a sense of hierarchy in the state, finally, national pride, and praised the need for a national Mussolini.

[4] Juan LINTZ, "Some Notes toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective", in Walter LAQUER (ed.), *Fascism. A Reader's Guide. Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography*, University of California Press, Berkley, 1976, pp. 23-26. The Bolshevik threat was rather external, while for example, in Romania and Hungary, an authoritarian state was to play down by violent means, and than ban on the basis of ideological dislike rather than class-struggle, any red revolutionary opportunity. Social and economic crises, as well as

Pilsudski, Carol II, Antonescu etc., approved and sympathized with some moderate fascists[1]. However, as representatives of right wing authoritarian regimes they always contrasted with the ambitions and lack of pragmatism, ambiguous and "ubiquitous", contradictory and nebulous ideology of their domestic fascists movement, rejected the idea of a mass party and strong paramilitary organizations. The subordination of the state apparatus to the party apparatus, the distinctive trait of fascism, was permanently and vehemently rejected[2].

Fascism is generally approached as an interwar political European phenomenon, a product of cultural fragmentation and moral relativism – a kind of spiritual collapse that permitted new forms of radical "palingenetic" (ultra)nationalism, new cultural, political and social ideas to flourish and thus shape its coherent ideology. The structural and political imperatives of economic modernization, and the stages of growth and development, that frequently tended to produce severe internal conflict as the balance of power shifted between, or threatened various social and economic groups, are therefore of an utmost importance in explaining fascism. Some scholars are even to suggest that what is known as fascism in Eastern Europe is but a variant of a common period of crisis, normally issuing into authoritarian government, that accompanies the effort of modern nations to establish their identity and power on a modern basis, overcome internal conflict and complete their economic and social modernization[3]. From this perspective fascism's resistance to modernization, urbanization, industrialization is no longer obvious – as it is with of liberal education, rationalist materialism, individualism, social differentiation and pluralist autonomy, and international cooperation or peace.

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the mood created by the influent Russian revolution were not completely disregarded, and governments tried to introduce political and economic reforms.

[1] Jerzy W. BOREJSZA, "East European Perceptions of Italian Fascism", in Stein Ugelvik LARSON, Bernt HAGTVET, Jan Petter MYKLEBUST (eds.), *Who Were the Fascist? Social Roots of European Fascism*, Universitetsforlaget, Olso and Tromso, 1980, pp. 2-3. Obsessed by one great idea, a true continuator of the basic traditions of the Polish nobility, less a modern politician pioneering 20th century techniques of practical government and a mere watcher Pilsudski never emulated the Nazi and Italian patterns. The others did this to a certain extend, and thus crossed the line of strictly observing the principles of authority, hierarchy and leadership. Yet they never renounced the assumption that nothing but the state, as a self-contained force, is capable of surmounting "anarchy and chaos". Striving to achieve political and state unity in the face of centrifugal tendencies they were to fight against bolshevism, oppose parliamentarism, and nonetheless destroy fascists when they were not able to politically manipulate them, and ideologically prevail over the formers nationalistic mystique.

[2] Stanley PAYNE, "The Concept of Fascism", in Stein Ugelvik LARSON, Bernt HAGTVET, Jan Petter MYKLEBUST (eds.), *Who Were the Fascist?*...cit., pp. 14-15. It is necessary to distinguish between the core fascist groups and forces of more conservative right authoritarianism. The later was to borrow some features from both the Italian and the German cases, but they emphasized rather incomplete clusters as they were non totalitarian, stressed a different state ideology, and rejected demagoguery. Backed by army officers, the authoritarian dictators were Saviors of their country from chaos – defenders of the old time order and honesty. In political practice they were to share with the "moderate" fascists the cult of the leader, the concentration camps for intimidation of political opponents, the anti-minorities and mainly anti-Jewish legislation. Their anti-capitalist economic policy gravitated toward a corporative economy based on the Italian model. Yet, the fascist social policy was never emphasized.

[3] Ludovico GARRUCIO, *L'Industrializzazione tra nazionalismo e rivoluzione*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1969.

Fascism was the political movement of the "losers" in the modernization process. Yet, a product of the very same, this political "latecomer" was in some underdeveloped countries a modernizing force and agent of change as well. Nonetheless, fascist idea of modernization referred exclusively to a new industry, stressed technological advance and productivity, and its faith in the role of education in creating a revolutionary "New Man". This is to explain why some moderate fascist movements mobilized large numbers of peasants and workers; and in more backward countries played the role of a revolutionary lower-class movement in search for drastic socio-economic change.

After 1918 a new cluster of conservative, authoritarian right forces, emerged in European politics. They rejected moderate 19th century conservatism and simple old-fashioned traditional reaction in favor of a more modern, technically proficient kind of a new authoritarian system that spurned both leftist revolution and fascist radicalism. Often confused with the former, the new authoritarian right was anti-conservative only in the very limited sense of a qualified opposition to the more moderate, parliamentary forms of conservatorism, advocated authoritarian government, but hesitated to embrace radical and novel forms of dictatorship in ideology, rejected the secularist irrationalism, vitalism and neo-idealism of fascism. Based on traditional elites rather that new formations of déclassé radicals, their tactics aimed more at manipulating the existing system than toward political conquest from the streets, never projected the same goals of mass political mobilization, and explicitly intended to maintain and affirm the existing social hierarchy.

From 1918 to 1939 the political system of independent Eastern nation-states moved from parliamentary democracy, fragile and unfulfilled, towards more authoritarian forms of government. Yet, except for Romania and Hungary – and in both cases only for months – none of them became a fascist state. Totalitarianism was rejected due to a freedom-seeking tradition deeply ingrained during the foreign subjugation. Therefore, even though democratic freedoms were curtailed, neither the multiparty system nor the influential opposition press was totally crushed by the authoritarian regimes. Their reliance on religious and past tradition, the different social origins and tactical differences, nonetheless different political programs were to keep them apart. Mussolini's Italy represented an inviting model for emulation for the right wingers, including fascist-type groupings, as Italy offered to East and Central European countries the example of a state which pitted against communism, and promulgated and partly implemented a definite program of economic reform and social reconstruction. Less attracted by the social policy of the fascists, the Eastern right wingers were to borrow its methods to improve the national economy and thereby enable the state to provide better care for the people. That is nonetheless to explain why the Eastern variants of fascism represented, with their revolutionary, irrational "detour" from modernity, and bitter response to the "insulting laissez faire", a mere product of humiliation and frustration, the "inner periphery" of the "European suburbs". Politically immature, lacking a solid social base and social function, facing huge discrepancies between ambitions and practice, those variants were nothing but an "internal displacement". In countries with an unevenly success of the bourgeois and capitalist revolution, and limited achievements, with no classes and less social mobility, the only ideological outcome of fascists was an inflation of national solidarity oriented toward and against the Great Finance, monopolistic capitalism, and the Jews. Too violent, less legal and unable to compromise in its relation with the establishment, failing to mobilize the "Proletarian movement" on the ground of national-social integration and national economy, they finally had to choose between obeying, and a romantic, nonetheless suicidal, youth protest and revolutionary struggle from below.